

From disciples of human dignity

Free to Be... You and Me

Conceived by Marlo Thomas.
141 pp. New York:
McGraw-Hill Book Company.
Cloth, \$7.95. Paper, \$4.95.
(Ages 8 and Up)

By **ERMA BOMBECK**

Move over, Jane.
Move over, Robbie.
Find another tree, Spot.

You've been replaced by a new
bedtime storybook called "Free to
Be . . . You and Me."

See Mommy give Daddy her apron?
See Daddy cry? (in that order). Look!
Look! Janet is on the pitcher's mound.
Oh! Oh! Jack is playing with his
new doll!

Up until now the Women's Libera-
tion movement has done for humor
what Woody Allen has done for the
centerfold. All that housewives have
had to combat boredom, depression,
neurosis, exploitation and submission
with has been a clenched fist and a
nocturnal headache.

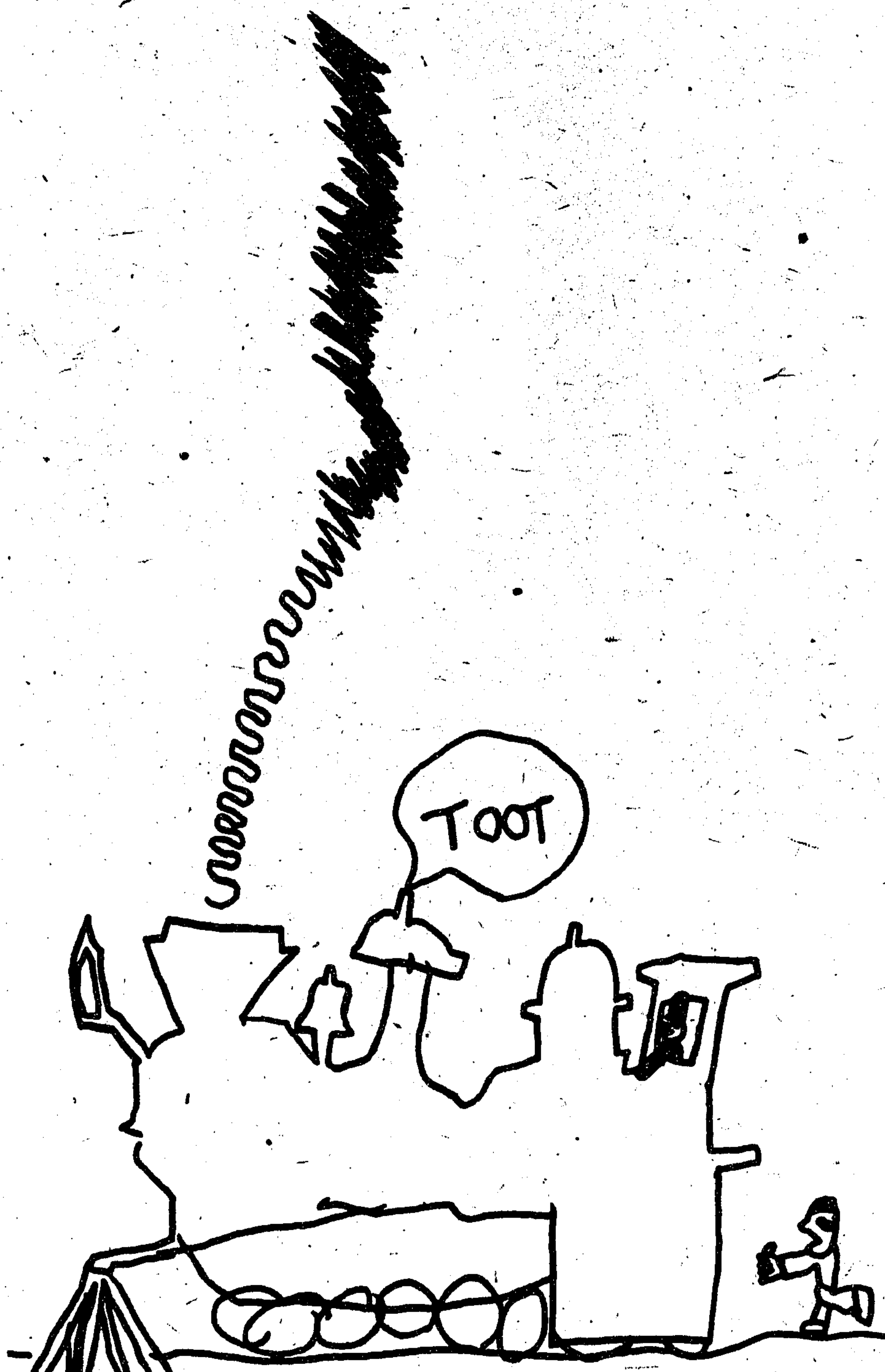
It would appear some help is on
the way for the woman who wants
to make things better without sacri-
ficing the family structure or discard-
ing something worth saving to do
it. It's a positive, refreshing book for
children and adults that tells you
not who you should be or ought to
be, but who you can be. It's like a
streaker running through "As the
World Turns."

Marlo Thomas has gathered togeth-
er some of the most noted disciples
of human dignity preaching today
. . . Gloria Steinem, Letty Cottin
Pogrebin, Shel Silverstein, Carl Rein-
er, Carole Hart, Mary Rogers and
Kurt Vonnegut Jr., to name a few.
They have filled the book with songs
to be played on your piano or guitar,
poems to be read aloud or to your-
self and stories often illustrated by
the crayon crowd . . . all with the
underlying theme . . . you are free
to be yourself.

Notably clever is "The Southpaw"
by Judith Viorst whose expertise on
the subject includes six children's
books and three sons. Richard, the
hero, is a Jr. chauvinist pork chop
who writes his girlfriend, Janet, "No
girl has ever played on the Mapes
Street baseball team, and as long
as I'm captain, no girl ever will."

Janet responds with a series of
subtle notes that observe . . . "I see
you lost your first game 28-0" . . .
and later, "Congratulations on your
unbroken record. Eight straight

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mor columnist and author of "I Lost
Everything in the Post-Natal Depres-
sion."



Drawing by Daniel Pinchbeck, age 7, from "Free to Be . . . You and Me."

losses" . . . much later, "In case you
were wondering, my batting average
is .345" . . . and finally her rejection
of his offer of a permanent place
in the outfield with a terse, "I pitch."

Somehow, humor has a way of
unclenching fists, whether they be
male or female. Normally, I resist
books that tell you how to be happy.
It's like defining sex. If you have to
explain what you're doing, it takes
something away from it. But no one
could quarrel with Elaine Laron's
verse:

*The Sun is filled with shining light
It blazes far and wide
The Moon reflects the sunlight back
But it has no light inside*

*I think I'd rather be the Sun
That shines so bold and bright
Than be the Moon, that only glows
With someone else's light.*

As a Mother I couldn't resist the
temptation to grade myself on how

many sexist sins I had committed
in the name of tradition.

Do I object to men crying? Hardly.
Mine not only cries over the check-
book, he has been known to bite right
through 400 cancelled scenic checks.

Do I object to role changing? Get
serious. I live for the day when my
husband becomes known at the re-
demption center as old Glue Breath,
and the high spot in his week is
when it rains on his Tupperware
party.

Am I raising my children to re-
gard one another as individuals and
not stereotypes?

The other night when my son
punched his sister in the face I said
to him, "Why did you do that? Is it
because she is a girl and you felt
a superior, masculine dominance in
putting her in her place?"

"No," he said, "I punched her be-
cause she is a rotten human being."
I'm doing something right.